

Elytraria-like plant proves to be  
- it is a gem "of finest ray serene"  
I was astonished to find such  
luxuriant tropical forests in  
S. Fla - from all reports I only  
expected to find depauperate specimens  
of 30 or 40 tropical trees.

Dr. Chapman told me, after his  
cruise in the fall of '75 that he  
was astonished at the smallness  
of the trees & spoke of his specimens  
rather contemptuously as sticks.  
I suppose Vasey paid as much  
as \$500. for the two or three dozen  
sticks Dr. Chapman secured.

I hope they were used for firewood  
instead of to represent the tropical  
forests of the U.S.

But my estimate of Dr. Vasey's  
ability has not been lessened  
since his appointment - Not many  
men of his calibre have such good luck.

Prof. A. Gray:

Dear Sir - I am at  
home again & am gratified to find  
some letters from you - From  
what Prof. Sargent told me of  
your intentions, I felt sure you  
were in Europe all this summer.  
I much regret that the package  
of specimens I put up at Key  
West had not been sent to you  
& I now make a special request  
that you will find & examine it -  
You will find in it a lot of things  
new - at least to the U.S.

It was a flat - page - 11' x 16' -  
addressed, I think, to Mr. Watson,  
possibly to Prof. Sargent.

I will soon overhaul my  
collections made between Key West

& Tampa - I send you samples -  
you will find them of much  
interest - I solved the great  
botanical mystery of South Fla.  
by penetrating to the "Royal Palm  
Hammock" as it is called by those  
who explored the Big Cypress  
during the last Indian war -  
I could find but one person  
who knew the way to it & he  
lost the way twice - When at last  
I stood at the foot of these trees  
I beheld the most wonderful  
tree - except as to size - in America,  
& at the same time the most won-  
derful Orchid growing on them -  
both companions in the Tropics,  
no doubt. The Palms have cylin-  
drical, smooth trunks, some 100 ft.  
high, surmounted by a crown of  
leaves & panicles; the leaves are  
plume-like in appearance & measure

about 20 ft. in length by 4" in width.  
The bud-sheaths & panicles are  
about 4" long. My next pkge.  
will contain specimens of leaves, fls.  
& fr. & I have sent Prof. Sargent  
a pkge. containing large sections of  
leaves & panicles - I will also  
send good spms. of the Orchid -  
It is wholly leafless, but has a  
multitude of succulent green runners  
- fls. large, white; spur 3' long;  
lip 2-forked, the forks long,  
slender & twisted.

I found the two sps. of *Thrinax*  
another *Sabal* (?) & the Cocoa-nut  
growing wild, & have thus doubled  
the list of U. S. Palms (tree-sps.)  
& of epiphytic Orchids (one of the  
latter I sent from Bay Biscayne).  
I am curious to know whether  
you will find a dissection of *Croton*  
in the pkge. sent - & what the little

that would blow us back to Key West in 2 or 3 days - But I found that the forests bordering Bay Piscagua & the Everglades needed careful examination. Here, then, was a dilemma - Should I turn my back on this work, or get myself into the mire financially. My money was at Key West & only enough for one month's expenses. I had agreed to pay my men, & could not make out my pay &c for May until I had paid & got receipts of ~~my~~ them. From this time till the 7<sup>th</sup> of Aug. I was in constant worryment & uncertainty about the means for carrying forward my work, & I had to play the part of debtor for the first time in my life.

I decided to treat to luck & started ahead, went into the everglades at two points, found a new *Anona*, an arborecent black-fruited *Chrysobalanus*

Of S. Fla. trees, some of which extend up the E. & W. coasts as far as Mosquito Inlet & Cedar Key, I found 65 sps. which have a diameter at breast-height of not less than 3' - Only 60 of these might properly be called trees. Of these, measuring only symmetrical trunks, 4° from ground, I found 46 to have trunks 6' or more in <sup>diameter</sup> height; about 30 measure 1° +; & a dozen range from 18' to 3° - In all I find nearly 200 trees in Fla. I have determined the range of most of them. The range, quantity & quality of the various Pines, Cypress, Cedar, &c - I have pretty well defined in my mind, but need to travel more before I can report confidently.



I find that *P. Elliotti* is only  
second in importance to *P. australis*.  
That there is plenty of *P. clausa*  
& *P. Fada*, especially as they are  
both worthless, as is *P. serotina*.  
Please not to divulge any of  
these weighty communications to  
any mortal ear except Prof.  
Sargents, for I am oath-bound  
not to divulge any of my obser-  
vations! It may be best for  
you to await Prof. Sargents  
permission before reading the  
foregoing, meanwhile keeping  
this in a strong iron box, locked  
with seven locks, bound with seven  
bands & sealed with seven seals!

If I had understood the nature  
of the forests & weather of S. Fla.  
I could have saved myself a  
vast amount of trouble - At  
Key West I filled out for a

two-months cruise, expecting  
in that time to finish the S. & W.  
coasts - I found it impossible  
to hire such a boat as I needed  
with two men (the number needed  
in these difficult waters) for less  
than \$5. or \$6. a day, & finally  
took up with a charcoal-boat,  
which with a negro & Spaniard  
I hired for the extraordinarily low  
price of \$2.50 per day - All the way  
from Key West to Miami we had  
contrary violent winds, & during  
that time three vessels were wrecked  
on this coast, one attended with  
the loss of 900 hogsheads of sugar.  
Finding so much & such heavy  
timber to cut & measure I could  
not reach Bay Biscayne till the  
27<sup>th</sup> of May - I did not expect  
to find much of interest there  
& did expect to have a wind

but found none & after waiting a few days on the Caloosa, I got credited for provisions & pushed on for Tampa. At sundown of the 26<sup>th</sup>, just inside of Gasparilla Pass we got among shoals, & had to remain there a day - This was the best luck we had, for we had to make an outside run of 40 miles & we had splendid weather for it while for a week before there had been violent squalls every day, some that would have upset us outside. On the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup> we entered Tampa Bay & after two days of skirmishing with squalls & water-spirits, reached Tampa at the close of the 31<sup>st</sup>. A few days later a mail boat was capsized in the Bay & a steamer & wharf were badly damaged by a spout. On reaching Tampa I fully expected to find

& spontaneous growths of Cocos & Casuarina & many new herbs - & many wood specimens, which I could not get elsewhere - All this with an unexpected delay about mailing the woods kept me there till June 13, when we hastened homeward.

The wind was then just reversed, light & blowing from the west, so that, with our best efforts, we only averaged 15 miles a day - reaching Key West June 21 - The negro declined to serve me further as he had become almost blind with salt spray on our up trip & the glare of the sun on the water in returning. (A young man from Jacksonville started from Key West with me but was taken with fever the third day & had to return.)

Both of my sailors were very disagreeable low men, but one cannot expect any good out of Key West - it is a perfect Sodom -

The Spaniard was willing to go on with me & as the sponging season was over I hired a Bermudian with a better boat for \$2. a day - I paid my men their June wages for one month & made out their accounts for the other, settled miscellaneous bills, spent the rest of my money for provisions, left my best clothes to secure my board bill, & after sending off my reports & collections of all sorts, sailed from Key West the last day of June -

On reaching Cape Sable, after a very tedious journey, the wind being dead ahead of us as usual, my new man was taken with fever & he was "under the weather" physically & mentally

till until he reached Tampa when he took a dose of whiskey & was all right again. About the time we left Bay Biscayne the rainy season set in & we saw no more clear sky day or night & almost all the wind came out of squalls. The insects were very bad until we reached Punta Rassa. After leaving Cape Sable the weather was simply an alternation of calms & squalls, & with such companions as I had, an ugly Spaniard, a melancholly Cook, and countless mosquitoes the voyage became almost intolerable, especially, but having no alternatives except the boat, the water or mangrove swamps, I chose the former, & at sundown, July 17, after a day of seasickness, reached Punta Rassa. Here or at Fort Meyers I expected to find a remittance



to Watt & Fuchsman. I don't know that you sent the latter, & Watt never pays under 12 months. Dr. Keck writes for me to send him two sets - As he wishes them to sell again, & as I know little about him, I feel a little suspicious. A person might easily make 3 sets out of 2 of mine, & thus by misrepresent me to three persons. I once sent one of these foreigners 3000 good Va. specimens, & he sent me 1000 poor Foreign specimens, & abused me when I asked for more. As for himself, he said he sometimes gave more & sometimes less, just as it happened. I wrote no more, but "pocketed the affront" as a "huge joke". If you know nothing against Keck you may send him the sets, or I will if I can do so through the Smiths.

a large remittance, but not a penny was there - As the treasurer disregarded my instructions about my checks & as the post masters said there was no office at Ft. Myers, all my nicely laid plans had come to naught. By telegraphing home I succeeded in getting money in just a week & after settling bills left Tampa on the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> & reached home the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup>. I now find myself with less money than I started with, my accounts being red-taped for the present - one lacking a duplicate, another a witness, & others needing to be itemized - and they know very well that my expenses were less than mine persons in ten would have made them -

I think it quite unreasonable that the Govt. should expect to hire me to do botanical work & to keep exact accounts both for one dollar a day. For mere botanical work that is enough, but who ever heard of an accomplished accountant working for less than \$5. a day? Perhaps the Govt. will employ me with an accountant hereafter, and a doctor to take care of him. Three of the four men that were with me took the fever (the Spaniard last) & the other went blind, & I had to doctor them. Surely the Govt. don't expect to hire a botanist, a book-keeper & a doctor all for one dollar a day - But perhaps the Govt. tried to hire such assistants for me and failed - I never heard of any one working around the Everglades & reefs in summer except

parchment-skinned spongers and botanists. A botanist can keep well & hearty for 40 days subsisting entirely on esthetic pleasure - give him a handful of Cocoa Plums occasionally & a bit of alligator meat or jerked rattlesnake & he will work the year round.

As to my botanical acc'ts. they are simplicity simplified, such acc'ts. as were kept by the old Academics & Arcadians. Take my acc'ts, I say, & pay at your convenience, & if it becomes a hardship to pay, consider them gifts. After receiving your remittance, I find nothing due except for the set sent to Munich, the two sent to Weigel, & those directed



The Report of Baron Egger is one of the most interesting works I ever received, & it is to be hoped that he will continue the work so well begun until he reaches as nearly as possible the Floridian *pumila*, which I have been exploring for the past four or five years.

During the three months recently spent on the reefs & borders of the Everglades I found a large number of W. I. sps. for the first time & new stations for nearly all of those detected by myself & others since 1875.

In S. Florida there are remarkable forms of many N. A. plants, forms which perhaps link together some U. S. & W. I. sps. Chapman's *Crotalaria*

"maritima" is one of these forms, the degree of variation not being equal to what I have called varieties of *Verbena Aubletia*, *Croton glandulosus*, etc. Our *Erythrina*, an herb of annual growth in N. Fla., at Cedar Keys has a woody stem 1' in diameter, at Cape Malabar 4', & at Cape Romano 9': yet no specific differences appear. etc. etc.

There are often marked variations in color, texture & position of parts & in general aspect of living plants which disappear in drying & are lost sight of in the herbarium.

On account of my familiarity with the Flora of this State, I am naturally much interested in that of the neighboring W. Indies & would be glad of an opportunity to explore them, but my pecuniary

resources do not allow me to undertake any foreign travels.

If Baron Egger wishes to employ me I am at his service for a proper compensation. Collecting in quantity, I can prepare 2000 full specimens a month, with a little assistance 3000. My next fascicle will be much easier of distribution than the last & I can put it up in a month or six weeks, including the ferns. I am in a hurry to have those plants I sent from Key West, examined; until they are I cannot send copy for labels.

If Baron Egger desires my assistance, let him make a proposition to me & I will give him a prompt answer - Yours very truly  
A. S. Curtis.